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Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: POLLS SHOW FRENCH HOPING MAJORITY WILL WIN
1978 ELECTIONS

SUMMARY. A SOFRES PUBLIC OPINION POLL PUBLISHED IN FIGARO ON OCTOBER 29TH REVEALS THAT 42 PERCENT OF THE FRENCH ELECTORATE ARE HOPING THAT THE MAJORITY WILL WIN THE 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS (AS OPPOSED TO 36 PERCENT WHO HOPE THE LEFT WILL WIN, AND 22 PERCENT WHO ARE NON-COMMITTED). THIS MIGHT NOT BE SO SURPRISING IF THE SAME POLL HAD NOT CONTAINED THE OLD QUESTION, NAMELY -- WHO DO YOU THINK WILL WIN IN 1978? HERE 30 PERCENT THOUGHT THE MAJORITY WOULD WIN AND 36 PERCENT THOUGHT THE LEFT WOULD WIN. IN ADDITION, 52 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED DECLARED THEY WOULD VOTE FOR THE LEFT AND 48 PERCENT SAID THEY WOULD VOTE THE MAJORITY, IF ELECTIONS WERE HELD NOW. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE QUESTION CONCERNING THE HOPES OF THE FRENCH

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ELECTORATE IS THE FIRST OF ITS KIND THAT WE CAN RECALL. GISCARD D'ESTAING HAS LONG SPOKEN OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL MAJORITY -- AS OPPOSED TO AN ELECTORAL MAJORITY -- THAT HE CLAIMS EXISTS IN THE FRENCH ELECTORATE. HE BELIEVES THAT THE MAJORITY OF FRENCHMEN ARE OPPOSED TO THE UNION OF THE LEFT IN THEIR HEARTS. THE CURRENITPOLL WOULD SEEM TO SUPPORT THAT, EVEN THOUGH IT IS PUT IN DOUBT AS A SURE BAROMETER OF L978 BY THE POLLS THAT GENERALLY GIVE 52 PERCENT OF THE VOTE TO THE UNION OF THE LEFT.

2. VARIOUS REASONS HAVE BEEN PUT FORTH TO EXPLAIN THIS SEEMING CONTRADICTION BETWEEN HEAD AND HEART: THE FRENCH VOTER HAS A TENDENCY TO JUMP ON THE BANDWAGON EVEN IF DOING SO DOES NOT CONFORM TO WHAT HE DESIRES; THE POLLS ARE A QUESTIONABLE INDICATION OF THE POLITICAL CLIMATE; THE FRENCHMAN HAS AT ONCE A DESIRE FOR STABILI-TY (IN THE PRESIDENT) AND DRASTIC CHANGE (IN THE FORM OF A SOCIALIST PRIME MINISTER). TWO WEEKS AGO, ONE PUBLIC OPINION POLL REVEALED THAT 73 PERCENT OF CORPORATE HEADS WERE EXPECTING A VICTORY OF THE LEFT. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT 73 PERCENT OF THEM ARE NOT GOING TO VOTE FOR THE LEFT IN 1978, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY HAS BEEN APPEALING TO THEIR SECTOR OVER THE LAST YEAR.

3. THE POLL MAY BE UPSETTING TO UNION OF THE LEFT LEA-DERS WHO BELIEVED THAT PSYCHOLOGICALLY THEY HAD THINGS PRETTY WELL SEWN UP AND THAT MOST FRENCHMEN WERE SIDING WITH THEM IN THEIR HEARTS, THOUGH THE FACT REMAINS THAT THEY CAN CONTINUE TO TAKE COMFORT IN THE NEWS THAT 52 PERCENT OF THE FRENCH ELECTORATE, ACCORDING TO THE POLL, STILL INTENDS VOTING FOR THEM AT THIS TIME. ON THE OTHER HAND GISCARD D'ESTAING CAN, IN A CERTAIN RESPECT, PAT HIMSELF ON THE BACK FOR HAVING PERHAPS CORRECTLY INTERPRETED THE POLITICAL PSYCHE OF THE AVER-AGE FRENCHMAN. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO NOTE, IF SOFRES CONTINUES TO POSE THE SAME QUESTION IN ITS MONTHLY POLL, TO WHAT DEGREE THIS PERCENTAGE OF FRENCHMEN WHO HOPE THAT THE MAJORITY WILL WIN IN 1978 CHANGES. IT IS OBVIOUSLY DANGEROUS TO READ MORE INTO THIS POLL THAN MAY EXIST, BUT IT SHOWS ONCE MORE THAT THE RESULTS OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

1978 ARE FAR FROM BEING AN ACCOMPLISHED FACT. IF, WITH THE DOLDRUMS SO PRONOUNCED AS THEY NOW ARE, THE LEFT CAN'T DO BETTER THAN 52 PERCENT, WE SAY IT'S STILL ANYONE'S GAME.
RUSH

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